

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

Summer 2013

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

It's been a cool wet spring and I've vicariously enjoyed several of our club members' trips. I hope we see some trip reports in this issue, they should be interesting. Some reported a lot of downed trees in the creeks and rivers in western Md and West Virginia. Recently, I was visiting Swallow Falls State Park in Garrett County, Maryland. This is the beautiful put-in for the Top Yough portion of the Youghiogheny. I was shocked at what I saw. This was once a beautiful virgin hemlock stand. It was hit by Hurricane Sandy last fall and is now a shambles compared to what it was. Many, many trees have been uprooted and where there was once a dense canopy of evergreen foliage is now an open sky. A sad transformation to say the least. Nature takes no prisoners.

On a more pleasant topic, the annual BRV moonlight picnic/pot luck dinner is again scheduled for an August evening. Mark Wray will again be officiating, and I'm sure there will be more info about this traditional event in this issue of the *Voyageur* [see page 7— Ed.]. I look forward to it.

I hope to do some summer paddling and will be posting on the unofficial BRV mailing list, a great resource for ad hoc trips. SYOTR.

Rick

2013 Joint BRV/MCC Smokey Mountains Trip

by Richard Hopley



Participants: Lee Belknap (K-1, Hendersonville, NC), David Bernard (OC-1, Richmond, VA), Dan Bertko (OC-1, Cambridge, MA), Kim Buttleman (OC-1, Chantilly, VA), Lois Carra (Cambridge, MA), Karen Egbert (K-1, Boulder, CO), Jon Hitchings (K-1, Boulder, CO), Richard Hopley (OC-1, Winston-Salem, NC), Glen Johnston (K-1, Rockville, MD), Pete Martin (OC-2, Westminster, MD), Xander Martin (OC-2, Westminster, MD), Bob Maxey (K-1, NoVA), Keith Merkel (K-1,

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Glen Johnston on Warwoman Creek

West Virginia Week of Five Rivers, One Hike, & One Bike Ride by Ron Knipling

Another fabulous week of COFA (Continuous Outdoor Frenetic Activity) in West Virginia! This was just my second year participating in the WV Week of Rivers, but from now on I'll be a regular. This year's April 20-28 event had 40-50 participants and generally fine weather. Water levels were good on most days, but not juicy. Special thanks go to Ron Ray, the chief organizer. I won't attempt to cover the event comprehensively, but rather describe the streams I did, along with one hike and one bike ride. Fellow adventurers on various days included Al Cassel, Glen Johnston, Wes Mills, Bob Maxey, Beth Koller, Kim Buttleman, Jenny Thomas, Keith Merkel, Zofia Kosim, Ed Evangelidi, John & Doug from NC, Nancy from Johnstown, and Dan from Frederick. Below I've described my week. The on-river water levels below are subjective estimates in relation to canoeing zero, which would be the lowest level one could paddle the river without having to get out of the boat due to running aground.

Sun April 21: Lower Glady Fork; +3" with Hendricks = 3.5'/1,500cfs, Bowden = 5.5'/750cfs. This was a first descent for four of the five paddlers on this run. I had previously hiked and backpacked on the Allegheny Trail along this stream, and had always wanted to paddle it. We ran the lower section from the CR12 bridge at Sully to the low-water bridge at Gladwin near the mouth of Glady on the Dry Fork. The remote beauty of this stream plus the nearly continuous rapids made this

an exhilarating run. The run is considered Class 1-2, but there were many zesty rapids. There were also dozens of fallen trees (many resulting from Hurricane Sandy), but we maneuvered around every one of them without a single portage. In fact, the strainers were part of the fun! The WV book lists this run at 7.5 miles, but we paddled for four solid hours without stopping to scout rapids or portage. I suspect it is actually 9 or 10 miles. We had about +3" of water and the flow over the take-out bridge was about 3" deep, suggesting that water at the top of the bridge might be a good visual "zero" for this run. Another group had run the upper 9-mile section of Glady from Rt. 33 to Sully the day before, and had reported 5-6 mandatory portages around strainers. Based on that, the lower section seems to be better.

Mon April 22: Dry Fork, ~9 miles to Hendricks; +5" with Hendricks = 3.2'/1,200cfs. This section of the Dry Fork is similar and comparable to the Bloomington section of the North Branch, except that it is less familiar to most DC-area boaters. It also has one or two rapids that are more complex and risky than the biggest at Bloomington; I would call them Class 3s. Thirty or more WOR boaters were on the Dry Fork on this day, and the Dry Fork seemed to be most popular river across the week. The American Whitewater minimum for this run is 3.0' at Hendricks, although many boaters ran it without complaint at 2.8' and lower.

Tues April 23: North Fork South Branch from just below Hopeville Canyon (+5" w/ Cabins = 5.3'/630cfs) into South Branch to Petersburg (+12" w Petersburg = 4.7'/960cfs). This ~12-mile trip was two rivers for the price of one. The ~7 miles on the North Fork was creek paddling, mostly Class 2 but with a couple of rapids approaching Class 3. At the confluence with the South Branch the river widened and deepened. The last ~5 miles on the South Branch to Petersburg was Class 1-2 with a strong current. Both rivers featured spectacular rock formations.

Wed April 24: Hike, Flatrock Run trail (TR 519) to near Roaring Plains trail, a few miles from the Dolly Sods. My body needed a rest from paddling, but I'm never too tired to hike. I followed this steep trail about 4 miles, almost to the top where it meets the Roaring Plains trail. The trail is an old logging road through the forest, but it goes by some lovely Flatrock Run waterfalls. Wildflowers were peaking, and the whole side of the mountains was covered with ramps. Now I'm searching online for ramp recipes. That evening, House 6 hosted a party. Love those Margaritas!

Thurs April 25: "Upper Lower" Shavers Fork from Elkins (Old Rt.33 Bridge) ~11 miles to CR 7, Clifton Run; + 2" with Bowden = 4.8'/370cfs. This Class 1-2 trip might be subtitled, "A Bridge Too Far, A Bridge Too Far." There was confusion regarding two different put-in bridges, and two different

take-out bridges. We probably made a bad choice for both. We put-in at the old Rt.33 bridge, but putting in 4 miles upstream at the bridge near Revelle's Family Campground probably would have given us more river action. At the take-out, we took out at the CR7 crossing near Clifton Run, but a closer bridge a few miles upstream (near CR9, Stalmaker Run) would have avoided some slow water. Still, it was a pleasant run down a scenic and undeveloped valley. There were long, wavy rapids, and even a few nice play spots.

Fri April 26: Bike ride on West Fork Greenbrier Rail Trail from top ~10 miles to near May, & return. The West Fork Greenbrier Rail Trail is a 22-mile trail from the village of Glady at the top to the town of Durbin at the bottom. The trail is a two-track dirt and

gravel-dust road through remote farms and woodland. Al Cassel and I started from Glady and rode about 10 miles before returning. It was often slow-going due to the trail's soft surface and occasional fallen-tree strainers. As we headed down the valley, we saw the West Fork Greenbrier grow from a marshy, braiding brook to a potentially canoeable creek. Later that night Al and I drank beer at the Purple Fiddle and heard a band called Marbin.

Sat Apr 27: North Branch, Bloomington release; +15" with Barnum = 4.3'/1,050cfs. Like most BRV's, I've done the Class 2 to 3-minus Bloomington run many times. But for me it had been a few years, and in my little 9' Equif L'Edge the waves seemed bigger, steeper, and rockier. The boaters in my group had long

drives home afterwards, so we blasted down the run in less than two hours. My L'Edge rode the waves well, but I still got plenty of use out of my sump pump.

Since every day of the WV WOR featured 3-4 different river trips, there was always the existential anxiety of knowing that, whatever choice you made, other great rivers would not be paddled. I particularly hated to miss a ~300cfs run down the Savage with Steve Etinger, Dick Pierce, Barb Brown, and others. Other rivers run during the week included the Tygart Gorge, Tygart Loop ("Aggregates"), "Middle Middle" Fork above Audra, upper Glady, Cheat Narrows, and Cheat Canyon. So many rivers, so little time! Wait 'til next year!

Ozark Paddling

Spent most of the month of May paddling the Missouri Ozarks. The Ozarks are fairly similar to what we paddle here, with the easier Rappahannock tributaries (Thornton River) coming to mind. Expect some trees down as the violent winds we've had the last few years were just about everywhere but also expect waters there to stay up much longer than here. Three rivers in the area (including the Arkansas Ozarks) are national wild and scenic rivers (good online maps) and can be paddled for long stretches, but the shorter rivers/creeks there are worthy of trips too. Our group (mostly from Florida, Georgia and North Carolina) paddled the southern part of the state from east to west with a typical plan being to paddle 3-4 days from one base camp then moving a bit further west.

A GREAT resource is [A Paddler's Guide to Missouri](#) which is put out by the state and will be updated soon. Even better, a free copy of the current book is available on www.lmvp.org/kayakswarm/Paddler'sGuide/. The guide is by watershed and affords the luxury of easily planning your groupings of rivers to paddle

by Ed Evangelidi

from one campsite. While specific references to gauges is not provided, the guide does state whether the river stays up all year, most of the year or requires a shot of rain or a lot of rain to bring up. Oh yeah, a good map book should also be purchased in order to find some of the access points. By the way, everyone out there calls it "floating" a river — whether flat-water or whitewater. Similar to the Rap. tributaries, we did not find much surfing but the wildlife is much more abundant and creek waters are generally much clearer. Camping was fairly easy to find with a national forest and corps of engineers areas being nearby. A few municipal campgrounds that we used were more obscure. Mid-sized towns were sprinkled throughout the area for easy resupply, etc. Usage of the popular rivers were horrendous during the Memorial Day weekend but fairly light during the rest of our time there. Outfitters were plentiful if you require shuttles, etc. There were horrific deadly tornadoes in the general area but they seemed to pick on non-boaters while we were there. (We know how to lean

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SMOKIES (Continued from page 1)

NoVA), Jenny Thomas (K-1, Frederick, MD)

Day 1: Saturday, May 11: Driving South

The first day is always a driving day, since it can be anywhere between eight and eleven hours from the I-495 Beltway to our first night's camp. This year the best water for the beginning of the trip was in north Georgia, so I reserved three campsites at the Moccasin Creek State Park CG. I always schedule this trip to end a week before the Memorial Day weekend, but still, finding campground vacancies for a large group on a fine May weekend can be tough, so I always try to reserve sites in advance for the first Saturday night, and I try to arrange to stay in one place from Thursday night through the end of the trip so that we will have staked our claim before the campground starts to fill up on Friday evening.

Moccasin Creek SP CG is about 15 miles west of Clayton, GA. There is a new campground about 10 miles east of Clayton in Longcreek, SC, which I will try next time I'm in that area. Clayton has the best selection of restaurants within 50 miles of the Chattooga River, so we always have to balance proximities when choosing where to camp in that area. This time it was easy to choose, though, because I

hoped we would be going to Amicalola Creek, which is southwest of Clayton, and a base at Moccasin Creek would shorten that day's long drive.

David and I arrived early to get a visual on the Warwoman gauge before claiming my CG reservations and then going into Clayton for an Italian dinner at Mama G's.

Day 2: Sunday, May 12: Warwoman Creek . -2" (RC at the put-in), 2.44' (Chattooga at US-



Pete Martin on the second pitch of "Edge of the World," Amicalola Creek

76)

This is a small tributary stream that enters the Chattooga from the Georgia side, river right, directly opposite the Earl's Ford put-in for Section III. The Earl's Ford access would be a suitable takeout, but would have a long, long shuttle to the South Carolina side. Instead we take out three miles down the Chattooga on the Georgia side, which allows us to park at riverside and avoid the usual long carry up from the river.

Warwoman is a small, intimate creek, and utterly gorgeous on a sunny day when the trees have all leafed out. At any level I have seen it, it is a Class III run with numerous ledges of various degrees of technicality, and several 5'- to 8'- tall rapids that make good Kodak.

We had plenty of water, even though the painted gauge at the put-in read -2". Any time the Chattooga is running above 2' it is worth checking the level on the

painted gauge; judging from previous scratchy experience, anything over -6" or so should be get-downable, and gauge -0 should be a terrific run.

The run finishes with the three miles of Chattooga between Earl's Ford and Sandy Ford that are the three best miles of Section III, in my view.

The shuttle back is easy because we have

to wend our way up the Forest Service road to Warwoman Road, from which it is a quick drive back to the put-in on Earl's Creek Road. Clayton is on the road back to camp, and we ate at the Peking Gourmet buffet.

Day 3: Monday, May 13: Amicalola Creek. 1.4' (Dawsonville)

This was a good level for us, and we would have been OK with a bit more. Only Keith and Pete ran all of the first big rapid, "Edge of the

World". Most of us carried around the first two drops, but there was still a lot more of this rapid below there. "Edge of the World" goes on for about a quarter of a mile of ledges.

Even if you skip "Edge of the World", there are a whole bunch of ledge drops and bedrock Class III rapids on this creek, ending in a couple of miles of flatwater on Amicalola and another mile-and-a-half or so of flat water on the Eto-wah River. This is another isolated run with a wilderness feel, and beautiful with the Spring foliage out.

We had left enough vehicles at the take-out (a privately owned field with a \$3/person fee) to take everyone back to the put-in, where we picked up Lee's van and headed back to Moccasin Creek CG, stopping at a Western Sizzlin' just north of Cleveland, GA, for dinner.

Day 4: Tuesday, May 14: Chattooga Section III. 2.25' (US-76)

This is one of the Classic Southern Class III runs, but by late Spring and the Summer is often too low to really enjoy. We were lucky to catch this at a near-perfect level; anything below about 1.8' begins to become tediously scratchy in the long shoaly bits.

I didn't boat this day. Over the last year, the coils on the Shuttle Mon-

ster have been going bad one by one (I don't complain – they lasted more than 300,00 miles!) and another one had begun to cause mis-firing on the way back to camp the night before, so after helping with the morning shuttle I spent the day in the Ford dealer, meeting everyone in Clayton for dinner at La Cabana.

We headed back for our fourth night at Moccasin Creek SP CG. This was a pretty good deal, having worked out to about \$8/person/



Pete and Xander Martin on the Middle Tellico.

night.

Day 5: Wednesday, May 15: Middle Tellico. 385 CFS, 1.95' (Tellico Plains)

We pulled out of Moccasin Creek early, knowing we had more than a two-hour drive to our next put-in. The Middle Tellico is another of the classic Southern runs, and another that ranks amongst everyone's favorites. We had a darn'-near optimum level, warm air, and no-one else on the river – not even

many fishermen.

Afterward we went into Tellico Plains to the Tellicafe for dinner (stuffed trout for me – yummmmm!) then we drove back up the river, 'way past the put in and beyond the Upper Tellico, left on North River Road to the North River Campground of the US Forest service. This was Dan's suggestion, and it was a lovely place, with about eight sites, only two others of which were occupied. Our group had grown smaller, and

we all fit into three sites, at a cost of \$3/person.

Day 6: Thursday, May 16: Upper Pigeon River. 1150 CFS (Hepco)

Again we hit the road early for the long hike up TN-68, I-75, and I-40 to the Pigeon River. We left a couple of vehicles at the takeout, right at I-40 NC exit 15 (Fines Creek Road) and

proceeded to Exit 20 where we followed Rabbit Skin Road to the river.

This was a Personal First Descent for everyone but Lee. This stretch had a number of nice Class III rapids, a Class III+ near the beginning, and one solid Class IV near the end, which caused the only carnage of the trip... and I just had to be the featured performer.

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SMOKIES (Continued from page 5)

I had my single closest brush with drowning, ever, when I was stuck in a very retentive frowning hole at the very bottom of that biggest, longest rapid. I lived because I held on to my boat and kept it upstream of me, in the meat of the hole, so I was not recirculated while I worked my boat first toward mid-river, then toward the river-right bank, until it finally caught enough current to pull me out. Yet it was five or six minutes before I recovered enough breath to thank Lee for giving me a tow once I had got out.

This is actually a pretty good run which I will do again if I am there with a smallish group, but parking is too limited to do it with a large group (we were down to eight by this point).

From the put-in, after running shuttle, it was an absolutely beautiful drive across the divide to Hot Springs, via Fines Creek Road and NC-209. We reached Hot Springs Campground in plenty of time to claim sites and get to dinner at the Iron Horse Restaurant. This time I had salmon. Yummmm again!

Day 7: Friday, May 17: Big Laurel Creek. -3.5" (RC at the put-in)

This is about boating 0 for this

classic Class III/IV creek run. I have run it as low as -5", but I won't again, and above +3" it starts getting a bit pushy for me. Much as I hated missing one of my favorite creeks runs, I took another day off as a rest day – I have just not been paddling enough in the last couple of years to be fit enough for a solid week of boating.

Everyone who went had a good time – I mean, it is impossible not

like the Lower Nolichucky. We all decided to call it a trip and head home a day early.

I think this is the fourteenth annual Smoky Mountains trip I have led, though I did similar trips prior to these formal club trips I schedule for late May. I have to say this is one of the best: we caught two beautiful creeks that most of the group had never before paddled (Warwoman and Amicalola), two classic Smokies favorites (Section III, Middle Tellico), a rarely-runnable gem (Big Laurel), and a big-water first descent (for most of us) (Upper Pigeon).

It was also, sadly, the last road-trip for my beloved Shuttle Monster. With, now (two weekend trips later), 307,000 miles on its battered body, arbitrary electrical functions starting to fail, and a maximum mileage or 12

MPG with boats or 14 MPG without (how often does THAT happen?), it has become too expensive to run, and I have ordered a new Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van to replace it. Sigh. Bye-bye.

There are photos from the four days I paddled (Warwoman, Amicalola, Tellico, and Pigeon) on my website: <http://www.kanubi.net> .



Jon Hitchings at Stairstep on Big Laurel Creek.

to love Big Laurel Creek. We had dinner at the Smoky Mountain Diner and stayed a second night in the Hot Springs CG.

Day 8: Saturday, May 18: Driving home

The morning dawned grey and rainy. The creeks had all emptied out but the French Broad and Nolichucky were still at scary-high levels and the Pigeon was releasing double, so the only things that looked doable to us were tame runs

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

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OZARKS (Continued from page 3)

INTO a tornado when boating.) It was tough to miss the whitewater season here in May but I'll be back there again to paddle some of the creeks that we missed and to revisit some of their nearby creeks that easily fit into a paddling grouping. It was that much worthwhile.

2013 BRV MOONLIGHT PICNIC

LOCATION: The usual **Violette's Lock/Virginia Canal Loop**, off River Road, north of Potomac, MD.

DATE: **Saturday, August 17, 2013**

TIME: Meet at Violette's Lock parking lot at **5:00 PM**. Canoe/kayak departure at approximately 5:30 PM; return to Violette's Lock approximately 10:30 PM (or whenever you like).

BRING: Food (see below), blanket/chairs as desired, water, bug repellent, flashlight(s).

FOOD: Bring a dish to feed at least eight people, as follows:

A-G: salads, uncooked veggies, fruit dish

H-N: desserts, snacks

O-Z: pasta, casserole, cooked veggies, rice, etc.

Be sure to bring serving utensils for your dish, if needed. BRV will provide chicken, drinks (soda, wine and beer — approximately two per person).

COST: **\$5** for adults, **\$3** for children 2-12 years old, **free** for those under 2.

RSVP: BRV Board members will be contacting all DC-area members. RSVP to your caller or to Mark Wray at 703-222-4842 by **Thursday, August 15th**.

CAMPING: It is permissible to camp at the picnic site, so if you would like to do so, bring your gear. There are usually some who camp, so you won't be alone.

PARKING: Parking at Violette's Lock is unrestricted, but there is little police surveillance. This has not been a high theft location in the past, but please do not leave valuables in your vehicles!

Birthplace of Rivers National Monument

There is a group working on establishing a national monument to commemorate the birthplace of rivers. A national monument can commemorate most anything and is administered by a variety of government agencies: US Forest Service, National Park Service, BLM, US Fish & Wildlife, etc. They are established by either an act of Congress or by presidential proclamation. Obama alone has designated 8 national monuments so far. The proposed national monument is in our boating backyard and includes the headwaters of the Cranberry, Cherry, Gauley, Greenbrier, Elk & Williams Rivers. However, the boundaries are still under discussion. If adopted, the monument will (continue to) be administered by the Monongahela National Forest. Information on the groups working on this project can be obtained thru birthplaceofrivers.org. — Ed Evangelidi

About the Blue Ridge Voyageurs (BRV)

The **BRV** is a voluntary association of experienced paddlers from the Washington, DC area. Club benefits include: trips for all skill levels (most at intermediate and advanced levels); BRV website and hotline for information and pick-up trips; *The Voyageur*, published 4 times a year; club roster, published yearly in March; holiday party; conservation projects; moonlight paddles & picnics; big trips to the Smokies, Canada, Europe, and Western rivers.

Meetings: BRV will hold meetings from 7-9 pm on the following dates in 2013: January 23, March 7, May 7, August 17 (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December TBD (Holiday Party). Meetings are followed by beer and pizza at a nearby pub. Location: Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library on Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) in Falls Church, VA. The library is on the east side of Rt. 7 about 0.6 miles south of I-495. Or, from I-66, take the Rt. 7 West exit and go about 0.6 miles west on Rt. 7. It's on the right.

BRV Website: The BRV website (<http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org>) provides information on trips, meetings, and other club events.

2013 BRV Officers: Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2013 Board of Directors: Ginny DeSeau, Ed Grove, Ron Knipling, Wes Mills

The Voyageur: Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Voyageurs

The Voyageur publishes information on club events, conservation and safety news, the club trip schedule, and other news of interest to BRVers. Publishing **trip reports** is a particularly important newsletter function. Trip Coordinators are requested to write up all club trips - particularly trips to unusual or especially interesting rivers. Trip reports and other articles are accepted in any form: via electronic mail (preferred; send to fico1@netzero.net), on disk, typed, handwritten, faxed or over the phone. For trip reports, try to include the following information (if applicable): names of participants, relevant NWS gauge readings of nearby rivers, description of the water level on the river (e.g., minimum, moderate, maximum, or number of inches above or below "zero"), weather conditions, hazards, difficult rapids, info on put-ins or takeouts, distinctive scenery, and overall difficulty in relation to rivers well known to BRVers. New information about the river (e.g., new hazards) is particularly important. **Photos** are also published. Send prints to the webmaster or e-mail digital photos to the newsletter editor.

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998, fico1@netzero.net. The annual roster will be kept current via updates published in each issue of *The Voyageur*.

Membership applications/renewals: submit to Frank Fico. Must renew by February 15 each year to be listed on club roster and continue receiving *The Voyageur*.



The Voyageur

c/o Frank Fico
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Deadline for Autumn Voyageur:
Friday, September 6th

BRV MOONLIGHT PICNIC, 17 AUG! See details on page 7.